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6/8/01

(533)

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

CONFIDENTIAL
TELEGRAM
08, 2001

June

To: SECSTATE WASHDC - IMMEDIATE

Action: WHA

From: AMEMBASSY CARACAS (CARACAS 1613 - IMMEDIATE)

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, VE

Captions: None

Subject: FONMIN DAVILA: OAS DEMOCRACY CHARTER DOA

Ref: None

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR DONNA HRINAK. REASON 1.5(B) AND (D).

"VICTORY" FOR VENEZUELAN FOREIGN POLICY

1. (U) Upon his return from the OASGA in San Jose, Costa Rica, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Luis Alfonso Davila triumphantly declared the deferral of discussion on the proposed OAS Democracy Charter as a victory for Venezuelan diplomacy. The deferral, he said, prevented the OAS from committing an "unpardonable error." Venezuela could not support a flawed text that had juridical and economic implications for Venezuela as well as other countries, he added.
2. (U) Asked about the ability of Foreign Ministers to approve the Democracy Charter, Foreign Minister Davila argued that the Quebec Summit called only for the "preparation" and not the "approval" of a text. He pointed out, however, that Venezuela, in fact, supports the approval of a democratic charter, but argued that the issue should first be discussed among civil society in member countries.

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TURNED-OFF BY "RUSH" FOR APPROVAL

3. (U) Davila complained that the Venezuelan and other delegations were taken by surprise and aggravated by the haste with which the issue was introduced and pushed. Criticizing the content of the document as "ambiguous," he specifically referred to a clause calling for the immediate expulsion of any country subject to "any constitutional alteration." The Foreign Minister observed that countries frequently alter their constitutions through entirely democratic means, as Venezuela had done in 1999. He also observed that the OAS Charter already calls for sanctions against countries that backslide democratically, but that those sanctions are gradual. Overall, Davila characterized the motion as "dead on arrival."

INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION NOT AN OPTION

4. (U) Toward the end of the press conference, Foreign Minister Davila remarked that anyone hoping to internationally isolate Venezuela would fail. He pointed out that Venezuela received support for the inclusion of "participative" democracy next to "representative" democracy from 24 of the 33 countries in the OAS, and that Venezuelan Ambassador Luis Herrera Marcano received the support of 27 OAS member countries for his inclusion in the Juridical Committee.

COMMENT

HRINAK

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